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ABSTRACT

Using the resources of the Women's Educational Equity Communications Network (WEECN), the authors addressed two questions: (1) What are the topics that have been extensively researched, and (2) What are the topics most frequently requested by those using information on women's educational equity? Some initial findings of this study are presented in this paper. First, some background about the establishment of WEECN and the availability of the Network's bibliographic services is provided. Data bases from which WEECN draws its citations are listed. Tables included in the paper present data for (1) topics that represent at least two percent of the total number of documents in the WEECN data base; (2) interest areas indicated by response to a coupon sent to potential WEECN users; (3) information topics requested 50 or more times by WEECN clients from October 1977 to September 1979; and (4) an analysis and ranking of interest areas by sex, occupational type, and region of residence of user. (GC)

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WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

WHAT IS BEING WRITTEN AND WHO IS INTERESTED?

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Since the early 1970's, we have seen the exponential growth of research and development in the area of women's educational equity. As we begin to consolidate findings, replicate studies, and venture into new facets of the problem, we need a thoughtful approach to research.

Two important questions as we prepare to move into the 1980's with additional research and development are 1) What are the topics that have been extensively researched and 2)What are the topics that are frequently requested by those using information on women's educational equity. By using the resources of the Women's Educational Equity Communications Network (WEECN), we pursued these two questions and present some initial findings in this paper.

Background

The Women's Educational Equity Communications Network is funded by the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA). Congress passed WEEA as part of the Special Projects Act of the Education Amendments of 1974, Public Law 93-380, and reauthorized it as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of the Education Amendments of 1978, Public Law 95-561. The Communications Network was established in October 1977, and is operated by the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. WEECN is an information service that 1) collects, screens, classifies, and stores resources; 2) answers questions by providing information on projects, materials, and activities related to women's educational equity; and 3) publishes bibliographies, information analysis papers, tipsheets, an abstract journal (Resources in Women's Educational Equity), and other kinds of publications that are built, for the most part, on the collected resources. WEECN's information resources

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and reference activities cover all educational levels from pre-school through re-entry and continuing education. Its services are available to teachers, administrators, counselors, curriculum specialists, preservice or inservice trainers, researchers, students, parents, and concerned citizens. WEECN's daily business of finding and categorizing existing resources and answering requests from the field allowed us to investigate what areas are being written on and what areas are of interest to those in the field.

Document Topics

Resources in Women's Educational Equity (RIWEE) is a semi-annual abstract journal that contains citations drawn from thirteen different databases (ABI/INFORM, AGRICOLA, America: History and Life, Dissertation Abstracts International, ERIC, Magazine Index, Management Contents, MEDLARS, National Technical Information Service, Psychological Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service, Sociological Abstracts, and National Information Center for Educational Media). The subject indexes of the first four issues of RIWEE were used to determine what topics are being written about. Those subject headings that have at least 130 titles listed under them are shown in Table 1. 130 is approximately two percent of the total number of titles in the four issues.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

This list is simplistic in that it does not give us any of the relationships between various topics (e.g., how many titles listed under Career Choice are also listed under Self Concept). Some cluster patterns, however, do emerge. For example, six topics deal with career/employment: Career Choice; Occupational Aspiration; Employment Patterns; Vocational Counseling, Development, Education; Employment Opportunities; and Working Women. Another cluster

deals with roles: Role Perception; Sex Role Stereotypes; Sex Role; and Self Concept. Two additional smaller clusters are 1) bias/discrimination: Sex Bias, Sex Stereotypes, and Sex Discrimination; and 2) women's education: Women's Studies and Women's Education. The one educational content area that emerges as predominant, therefore is the career/employment area. We will return to this table after a presentation of the interest area data.

Interst Areas

This data is drawn from two sources: a special coupon and WEECN reference data. We sent a coupon to a large number of individuals and asked them to return it to us if they wished to be added to the WEECN mailing list. We also asked them to check, according to a list of 20 interest areas, which WEECN publications they would like to be informed about. Table 2 lists the percentages of those responding "yes" to the 20 areas. Table 3 lists the topics for which 50 or more substantive reference requests have been received by WEECN.

TABLES 2 AND 3 ABOUT HERE

Looking across Table 1, 2, and 3, we can see that several high interest areas are not represented in the document topic list. For example, of the top five areas in Table 2 (Career Awareness, Sex Roles and Stereotypes, Statistics on Women's Participation in Education, State and Federal Legislation, and Sex Differences and Similarities), only three (Career Awareness, Sex Roles and Stereotypes, and Sex Differences and Similarities) are well represented in the literature.

From the next five areas in Table 2 (Sexism in Language, Re-entry Programs, Minority Women, Vocational Education, and Nonsexist Instructional Materials), only one is found in Table 1 (Vocational Education).

Of the 15 information topics in Table 3, six are represented in the literature: Career Education/Career Awareness/Career Opportunites, Administration/Management Development, Higher Education, Sex Discrimination/Sex Segregation/Sex Stereotypes/Sexism, Employment/Jobs/Salaries, and Vocational Education.

Some of the high interst areas not well represented in the literature are Re-entry Programs, Sexism in Language, Minority Women, Displaced Homemakers/Homemakers/Marriage/Marital Status, and Fellowships/Scholarships/Student Financial Aid.

Because interest areas might vary according to region of the country, sex of the responder, or position of responder, we looked for differences by each of these categories. Table 4 shows the results of this analysis. Each responder was coded according to the U.S. Office of Education's ten regions. Nine interest areasare differentiated by specific regions. These differences are elaborated in Table 5. Eight interest areas are differentiated by sex of responder. These are detailed in Table 6.

TABLES 4, 5, 6 ABOUT HERE

Although close to half of the interest areas are differentiated by both region and sex, nineteen of the twenty areas are differentiated by position.

TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

Looking at Table 7, we see that Vocational Education appears to be of greater interest to Elementary/Secondary, Government, and Women's Groups (51%, 56%, and 54%, respectively) than to other groups. Physical Education is of greatest interest at the Elementary/Secondary level (31%), whereas Career Awareness is highest for Women's Groups (73%) followed by Government (70%). Rural Girls and Women is of greatest interest to Women's Groups (36%) and Minority Girls and Women comes first with Government (57%) followed closely by Women's Groups (56%). School Influences is highest for Elementary/Secondary (59%).

Table 8 looks at this data in another way. It rank-orders the nineteen interest areas for each of the six positions, thus allowing us to see what some of the priorities of these positions are.

TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE

Career Awareness ranks first with all six positions. State and Federal Legislation ranks second for three of the six positions (Government, R&D/Info., and Bus./Prof.). Statistics on Women's Participation in Education comes within the first four topics for all six positions and ranks third for four of the six (Government, R&D/Info., Women's Groups, Bus./Prof.). Taking the top five topics in each of the six positions, we can arrive at the following list of nine "priority" areas: Career Awareness, School Influences, Nonsexist Instructional Materials, Statistics on Women's Participation in Education, Sexism in Language, Sex Differences and Similarities, State and Federal Legislation, Re-entry Programs, Minority Women, and Vocational Education.

Moving beyond percentages, we correlated the 20 interest areas to see if there are patterns of relationships. The results of this analysis are shown in Figure 1. This "conceptual map" helps us to understand that interest areas do not stand alone, but are actually clusters of areas.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

For instance, taking the "priority" topics listed above, we find that Career Awareness is correlated with Vocational Education; School Influences is correlated with Family Influences and Textbook Bias; Nonsexist Instructional Materials is correlated with Nonsexist Childrearing, Text Bias, Textbook Bias, and Sexism in Language; Sexism in Language is correlated with Nonsexist Instructional Materials, Textbook Bias, and Sex Roles and Stereotypes;

Sex Differences and Similarities is correlated with Sex Roles and Stereotypes; Minority Girls and Women is correlated with Disabled Girls and Women; and Vocational Education is correlated with Career Awareness.

These patterns not only help us better understand the concerns of WEECN clients, but also indicate possible relationships to be explored further in our research and development efforts.

Conclusion

Data from the Women's Educational Equity Communications Network is only one source of information on the needs of those interested in women's education and the materials available in this area. As this data is combined with data from other sources and we have a stable pattern, we can better determine research priorities. These priorities can then be elaborated through descriptive, explanatory, program, and evaluation research. These research outcomes then allow us to better meet the needs of those requiring information on women's educational equity.

TABLE 1

Document Topics from Resources in Women's Educational Equity*
That Represent at Least Two Percent of the Total Number of Documents

Topics	Number of Documents
Working Women	622
Sex Role	610
Sex Discrimination	602
Sex Differences	582
Sex Stereotypes	420
Feminism	350
Employment Opportunities	279
Self Concept	245
Sex Role Stereotypes	222
Vocational Counseling, Development, Education	196
Employment Patterns	194
Administrative Personnel	190
Women's Education	186
Higher Education	183
Affirmative Action	169
Occupational Aspiration	158
Career Choice	150
Sex Bias	143
Role Perception	137
Women's Studies	130

*Volumes 1, 2, 3 (no. 1), 3 (no. 2); Total number of documents=6570

TABLE 2

Interest Areas Indicated by Responders to WEECN Coupon

Interest Area	Percentage "Yes"
Career Awareness	68%
Sex Roles and Stereotypes	68
Statistics on Women's Participation in Education	60
State and Federal Legislation	55
Sex Differences and Similarities	50
Sexism in Language	47
Re-entry Programs	46
Minority Women	46
Vocational Education	42
Nonsexist Instructional Materials	41
School Influences	39
Family Influences	38
Test Bias	33
Textbook Bias	33
Mental Health	32
Nonsexist Child Rearing	30
Rural Women	24
Disabled Women	23
Mathematics	21
Physical Education	20

N=3916

TABLE 3

Information Topics Requested by WEECN Clients*
October 1977 -September 1979

Topic	Number of Requests
Career Education/Career Awareness/Career Opportunities	214
Fellowships/Scholarships/Student Financial Aid	167
Displaced Homemakers/Homemakers/Marriage/Marital Status	133
Elementary/Secondary Education	132
Administration/Management Development	129
Higher Education	114
Sex Discrimination/Sex Segregation/Sex Stereotypes/Sexism	105
Employment/Jobs/Salaries	101
Grants/Proposals	82
Vocational Education	68
Science and Mathematics Curriculum/Education	59
Curriculum and Program Development/Evaluation	54
Physical and Mental Health	50
Re-entry Programs	50
Title IX	50

*50 or more requests

TABLE 4

Analysis of Interest Areas from User Request Data - 3916 Users

INTEREST AREA	Significance of Differences by: REGION	SEX	POSITION
Vocational Education	**	*	**
Mathematics	*	-	**
Physical Education	-	**	**
Career Awareness	*	**	**
Test Bias	-	**	**
Textbook Bias	-	-	**
Sexism and Language	**	-	**
Nonsexist Instructional Materials	*	-	**
Nonsexist Childrearing	-	*	**
Rural Girls and Women	**	-	**
Disabled Girls and Women	-	-	**
Minority Girls and Women	**	-	**
Sex Differences and Similarities	**	-	**
Sex Roles and Stereotypes	-	-	-
Family Influences	-	*	**
School Influences	*	-	**
Mental Health	-	-	**
State and Federal Legislation	-	-	**
Re-entry Programs	-	**	**
Statistics on Women's Participation in Education	-	**	**

NOTE: ** = p less than .01 (chi-square test of interest frequences);
* = p less than .05, greater than .01
- = p greater than .05

TABLE 5

Interest Areas by Region

Differences by Region

INTEREST AREA	REGION 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Vocational Education	40%	43%	40%	44%	45%	39%	44%	52%	48%	44%
Mathematics	20	23	20	19	19	12	21	29	22	23
Career Awareness	71	70	65	70	66	68	76	68	65	64
Sexism and Language	41	45	42	46	49	51	47	62	48	51
Nonsexist Instructional Materials	38	39	35	41	42	47	45	46	43	48
Rural Girls and Women	18	21	26	30	22	25	33	36	20	27
Minority Girls and Women	37	47	46	45	43	56	45	39	51	46
Sex Differences and Similarities	44	54	48	52	52	53	51	56	44	50
School Influences	33	39	37	39	38	37	39	46	38	49
N=	327	536	538	313	761	173	229	111	673	220

Region 1 Connecticut, Main, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

Region 2 New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

Region 3 Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia

Region 4 North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Tennessee

Region 5 Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin

Region 6 Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, New Mexico

Region 7 Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska

Region 8 Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

Region 9 Arizona, California, Nevada, Guam, Hawaii, American Samoa

Region 10 Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Alaska

TABLE 6

Interest Areas by Sex

Differences by Sex

INTEREST AREA	SEX Female	Male
Vocational Education	41%	47%
Physical Education	20	26
Career Awareness	69	61
Test Bias	32	40
Nonsexist Childrearing	31	26
Family Influences	39	33
Re-entry Programs	48	35
Statistics on Women's Participation in Education	62	52
N =	3301	437

TABLE 7

Interest Areas by Position

Differences by Position

INTEREST AREA	Elem./ Sec.	Higher Educ.	Govern- ment	R&D/ Info.	Women's Groups	Bus./ Prof.
Vocational Education	51%	34%	56%	48%	54%	38%
Mathematics	27	19	22	24	27	16
Physical Education	31	18	25	24	23	16
Career Awareness	67	68	70	65	73	62
Test Bias	47	28	43	41	34	30
Textbook Bias	50	27	42	41	35	32
Sexism and Language	53	41	56	50	54	47
Nonsexist Inst. Mat.	55	34	50	48	48	41
Nonsexist Childrearing	31	26	30	33	39	34
Rural Girls & Women	12	21	31	29	36	23
Disabled Girls & Women	12	22	32	24	33	20
Minority Girls & Women	32	44	57	49	56	42
Sex Differences and Similarities	40	52	54	47	49	50
Family Influences	41	35	38	40	44	40
School Influences	59	32	46	46	38	38
Mental Health	26	31	31	34	40	35
State and Federal Legislation	50	52	66	57	60	53
Re-entry Programs	17	50	44	44	64	41
Statistics on Women's Participation in Education	54	64	62	55	63	51
N =	350	181	275	429	477	574

NOTE: R&D/Info. designates R&D labs and centers, information programs and services
Bus./Prof. designates primarily businesses and professional groups and associations.

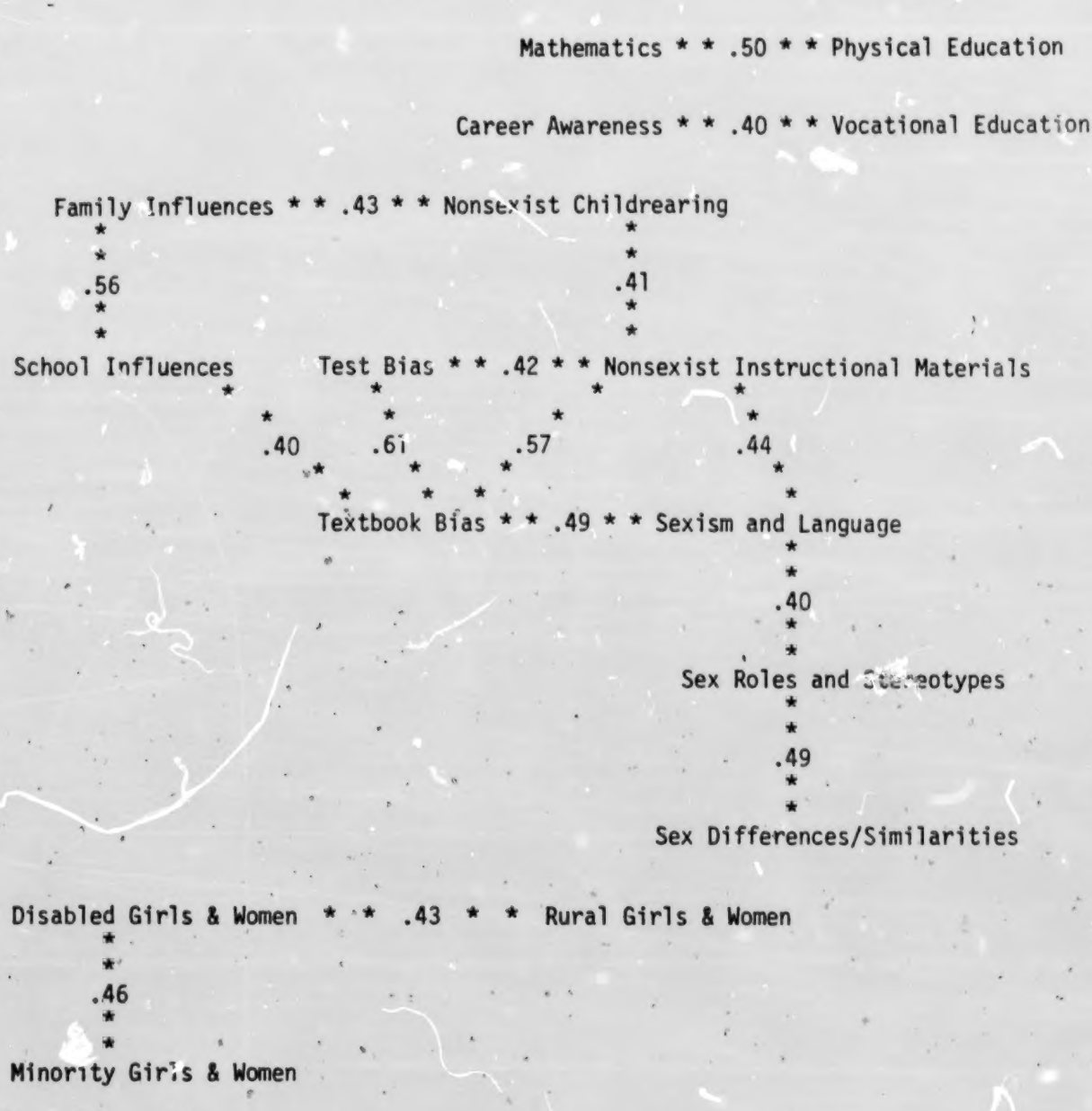
TABLE 8

Rank Order of Interest Areas by Position

Elem /Sec.	Higher Ed.	Government	R&D/Info.	Women's Groups	Bus./Prof.
Career Awareness (67%)	Career Awareness (68%)	Career Awareness (70%)	Career Awareness (65%)	Career Awareness (73%)	Career Awareness (62%)
School Influences (50%)	Statistics on Women in Education (64%)	State & Federal Legislation (66%)	State & Federal Legislation (57%)	Re-entry (64%)	State & Federal Legislation (53%)
Nonsexist Instruc. Materials (55%)	Sex Differences and Similarities (52%)	Statistics on Women in Education (62%)	Statistics on Women in Education (55%)	Statistics on Women in Education (63%)	Statistics on Women in Education (51%)
Statistics on Women in Education (54%)	State & Federal Legislation (52%)	Minority (57%)	Sexism in Lang. (50%)	State and Federal Legislation (60%)	Sex Differences & Similarities (50%)
Sexism in Lang. (53%)	Re-entry (50%)	Vocational Ed. (56%)	Minority (49%)	Minority (56%)	Sexism in Lang. (47%)
Vocational Ed. (51%)	Minority (44%)	Sexism in Lang. (56%)	Vocational Ed. (48%)	Vocational Ed. (54%)	Minority (42%)
State & Federal Legislation (50%)	Sexism in Lang. (41%)	Sex Differences and Similarities (54%)	Nonsexist Instruc. Materials (48%)	Sexism in Lang. (54%)	Nonsexist Instruc. Materials (41%)
Textbook Bias (50%)	Family Influ. (35%)	Nonsexist Instruc. Materials (50%)	Sex Differences and Similarities (47%)	Sex Differences and Similarities (49%)	Re-entry (41%)
Test Bias (47%)	Vocational Ed (34%)	School Influences (46%)	School Influences (46%)	Nonsexist Instruc. Materials (48%)	Family Influ. (40%)
Family Influ. (41%)	Nonsexist Instruc. Materials (34%)	Re-entry (44%)	Re-entry (44%)	Family Influ. (44%)	Vocational Ed. (38%)
Sex Differences & Similarities (40%)	School Influences (32%)	Test Bias (43%)	Test Bias (41%)	Mental Health (40%)	School Influences (38%)
Minority (32%)	Mental Health (31%)	Textbook Bias (42%)	Textbook Bias (41%)	Nonsexist Child Rearing (39%)	Mental Health (35%)
Physical Ed. (31%)	Test Bias (28%)	Family Influ. (38%)	Family Influ. (40%)	School Influences (38%)	Nonsexist Child Rearing (34%)
Nonsexist Child Rearing (31%)	Textbook Bias (27%)	Disabled (32%)	Mental Health (34%)	Rural (36%)	Textbook Bias (32%)
Mathematics (27%)	Nonsexist Child Rearing (26%)	Rural (31%)	Nonsexist Child Rearing (33%)	Textbook Bias (35%)	Test Bias (30%)
Mental Health (26%)	Disabled (22%)	Mental Health (31%)	Rural (29%)	Test Bias (34%)	Rural (23%)
Re-entry (17%)	Rural (21%)	Nonsexist Child Rearing (30%)	Mathematics (24%)	Disabled (33%)	Disabled (20%)
Rural (12%)	Mathematics (19%)	Physical Ed. (25%)	Physical Ed. (24%)	Mathematics (27%)	Mathematics (16%)
Disabled (12%)	Physical Ed. (18%)	Mathematics (22%)	Disabled (24%)	Physical Ed. (23%)	Physical Ed. (16%)

FIGURE 1

"Conceptual Map" Based on Correlations among Interest Areas


Mathematics * * .50 * * Physical Education
Career Awareness * * .40 * * Vocational Education
Family Influences * * .43 * * Nonsexist Childrearing
.56
.41
School Influences
Test Bias * * .42 * * Nonsexist Instructional Materials
.40
.61
.57
.44
Textbook Bias * * .49 * * Sexism and Language
.40
Sex Roles and Stereotypes
.49
Sex Differences/Similarities
Disabled Girls & Women * * .43 * * Rural Girls & Women
.46
Minority Girls & Women